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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 000684

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2013

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SUBJECT: FRENCH MFA RESPONDS POSITIVELY TO DEMARCHE ON
ENCOURAGING GREATER REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT WITH IRAQ

REF: STATE 35471

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4. (b), (d).

11. (C) French MFA desk officer Olivier Masseret on April 9 took note of the main points of our latest message on Iraq (reftel) and said he would include them in briefing papers being assembled for FM Kouchner, who will represent France at the upcoming Iraq neighbors meeting in Kuwait. He indicated general agreement with our position and claimed that France has used "every occasion" to exhort Iraq's Sunni Arab neighbors to expand their engagement with Baghdad. Masseret added that France was pleased that Saudi Arabia and others had announced their intention to reestablish embassies in Baghdad.

12. (C) With respect to the Iraq Compact meeting in Stockholm in May, Masseret affirmed France's intention to attend but the level/identity of such representation was still under discussion. He understood that Kouchner wants to go, but his cabinet is still setting his schedule for that timeframe. When we asked about French efforts to encourage greater EU engagement with Iraq on all levels, Masseret responded that Kouchner intended to do so at the next three EU general affairs councils set for this month (after the Kuwait meeting), May (before the Stockholm meeting), and early June (to follow up the Stockholm meeting).

13. (SBU) As noted in a recent conversation with visiting Senior Coordinator for Iraqi Refugees Foley (reported septel), the MFA has told us Kouchner wants to use the Kuwait meeting to focus attention on the plight of Iraqi refugees.

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